

# Update

Winter 2012

## Narrative Mediation

By Mark Combs

Narrative mediation, a relatively new approach to conflict resolution, is being used for a broad range of conflict areas, including: restorative conferencing in schools, organizational conflict, and peace building. Narrative mediation differs from facilitative mediation in terms of the focus of the mediation and the role of the mediator. Understanding those differences can help us assess how broadly narrative mediation can be used, and what this approach contributes to our understanding of the power of mediation.

A central focus of facilitative mediation is on the identification of underlying interests. This focus distinguishes mediation from a rights based or legal approach. Narrative mediation goes beyond interest identification and focuses more broadly on the parties' stories and the meaning of those stories. It is based on the idea that the stories that we tell are how we understand ourselves, our relationships, our work, and our communities. By understanding these stories we understand how the parties see right and wrong, good and evil.

Because narrative mediators believe that story telling reveals such deep aspects of the parties, they also believe that the mediator has responsibility to create a space of trust and respect where stories can be told. They speak of creating a "sacred" or "gracious" space; of preparing a com-



fortable and safe physical environment; and of the mediator's self-preparation so they can be part of welcoming the parties so they feel safe with the kind of self disclosure inherent in the telling of personal stories.

Narrative mediators also believe that when a mediator listens to the parties' stories, he or she affects those stories. By asking certain

questions, by responding to the story through active listening, by simply being a specific witness to the story, mediators have input into how the parties' stories are told and how they are understood. In this way mediators are not "neutral," and, the narrative mediators argue, we delude ourselves if we believe that we do not tamper with the parties' stories.

Along with this insight, come a couple of realizations. First, mediators -- since they do actively participate in the telling and meaning of the parties' stories -- should be subject to a higher threshold of accountability. And second, mediators should appreciate the central role of storytelling in how parties can be influenced and even transformed through mediation. Mediators listen to both (or all) the parties' stories, influencing and subtly transforming all of them. Out of this complex process, mediators are called upon to take responsibility for the nature of the community that is

created in mediation.

Narrative mediation challenges the assumptions in facilitative mediation that the mediator can and should be “neutral.” The narrative mediator believes that no one who listens to a story can stand outside it and look on as a neutral party; rather, by listening we participate in the story and, inevitably change it. In accepting this, the narrative mediator must both have humility in the face of the power they have, and also believe that positive change can come from trading stories that are transformed in the act of telling them.

**Rethinking the Way We Work:  
Using Conflict Resolution to Transform  
Organizations and Workplaces**

An Advanced Mediation Workshop with

Guest Presenter Ken Cloke

Wednesday, Feb. 8, 2012

9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Tuition: \$170

Antioch University Seattle

Room 100 2326 6th Ave

Seattle, WA 98121

To register call 206-258-4111 or online at

<http://www.antiochsea.edu/ce/>

***Save the Date!***

**Volunteer Recognition Party 2012**

Tues., Feb. 7th, from 5:00 — 8:00 PM  
at Mercer Slough Environmental Education

Center for recognition, food and fun...

Volunteers and family members are welcome.

Watch your inbox for the evite invitation.



**Presidential Volunteer Service Award**

Congratulations to the BNMP nominees for the Presidential Volunteer Service Award for 2011, Mike Brown, Peter Sugarman, Steve Creighton, Jenny Winkler and Zoë Henderson. An award ceremony will take place sometime in January 2012 at City Hall. We appreciate all your energy and enthusiasm for mediation!

**Save the dates for  
Bellevue Neighborhood Forums**

Last April, more than 100 residents joined author Peter Lovenheim as he kicked off the 2011 Bellevue Neighborhood Forum with his deeply personal account of creating neighborhood connections. That resulted in an interactive discussion about ways to build stronger connections between neighbors. For 2012, the Bellevue Neighborhood Forums will go a step further, focusing not just on building connections, but creating caring networks that address neighborhood and community needs.

At the first forum on **Feb. 29**, inspirational author and leadership expert Bill Grace will share his “common good” leadership philosophy and commitment to pursue a just, peaceful and sustainable world. A second forum on **March 29** will focus on education and discussion around timely critical issues that affect neighborhood and community livability. Discussion could include such topics as: housing the people in our community, and providing healing environments for at-risk youth.

For those ready to move from intention to action, the **April 19** program will be a hands-on workshop format, resulting in a concrete strategy for progress. There is no charge, all are welcome, and forums may be attended individually or as a series.

Mediation volunteers who are interested in helping with the forums should contact Julie Ellenhorn by Jan 16 at 425-452-6836 or [jellenhorn@bellevuewa.gov](mailto:jellenhorn@bellevuewa.gov)

**VOLUNTEER NEWS**

***New Conciliators:***

Vincent Humphrey

***Entered Practicum Phase:***

Mike Brown  
Steve Creighton  
Peter Sugarman

***Graduated from Practicum:***

Catherine Zimmerman



## Parent—Teen Update

By Gwen Jones

Happy New Year everyone! With the new year we will have some new activities for our volunteers. A new peer mediation program will begin at Highland Middle School in early 2012, and we have been asked to conduct the training. Some of our volunteers will be able to assist with this training. If you are interested in helping, please let me know.



We are planning a new Parent-Teen Mediation Training for June of 2012 in order to bring in a new group of volunteer mediators. As part of the recruitment process we will conduct short lunch time informational sessions at all of the high schools, and I will contact some of you to help with these sessions.

In addition, there will be opportunities for many of you to assist with the actual training in June. You may be asked to coach the trainees in their role plays, or to help with the presentation of some of the training material.

When we get closer to the June training, there will be an In-Service called "Train the Trainer" to help prepare you for your role as a coach. I will let you know the exact date and time as we get closer to the training. In the meantime, as mediation cases come up, I will let you know about opportunities to observe or mediate.

## **BNMP Training Opportunities For Mediators and Conciliators**

### **Negotiation and Conflict Management Training**

(Prerequisite for Basic Mediation Training)

Cost: \$295.00

Wed., Jan. 25th, 5 PM–9 PM, Room 1E-112

Fri., Jan. 27th, 9 AM–5 PM, Room 1E-112

Wed., Feb. 1st, 5 PM–9 PM, Room 1E-120

Fri., Feb. 3rd, 9 AM–5 PM, Room 1E-118

### ***Save the Date!***

#### **Volunteer Recognition Party 2012**

Tues. Feb. 7th, from 5:00 — 8:00 PM  
at Mercer Slough Environmental Education  
Center for recognition, food and fun...

### **Mediation Training**

March 2012, dates to be determined.

(Prerequisite is the Negotiation and Conflict  
Management Training)

### ***In-Service Training:***

#### **Panel of City Experts on**

#### **Residential Property Complaints**

April 2012, date to be determined

### **Conciliation Training**

May 2012, dates to be determined

### **Parent-Teen Mediation Training**

June 25—29, 2012

### **Program Staff:**

Program Co-Manager:	Cheryl Cohen	-	452-5222
Program Co-Manager:	Andrew Kidde	-	452-5288
Program Assistant	Gwen Jones	-	452-2897

City of Bellevue website: <http://www.bellevuewa.gov>  
(Look for the Mediation Program under "Neighborhood Information")

---

*Volunteer Profile:*

**Mark Combs**



Mark has been volunteering with the City of Bellevue Neighborhood Mediation Program since August of 2011 and appreciates the opportunity to work with people in the Bellevue community. He has a deep interest in how people resolve conflict, and is currently pursuing a master's degree in Negotiation and Dispute Resolution from Creighton University. Mark holds a B.A. in International Relations from the University of San Diego, works for T-Mobile as a Contract Negotiator, and resides in Bellevue with his wife and daughter. He enjoys volunteering at Puesta Del Sol where his daughter is a kindergartener, and occasionally gets out for a round of golf.

---

**BELLEVUE  
NEIGHBORHOOD MEDIATION PROGRAM**

---

City of Bellevue Department of Planning and Community Development  
P.O. Box 90012 Bellevue, WA 98009-9012